

# AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM

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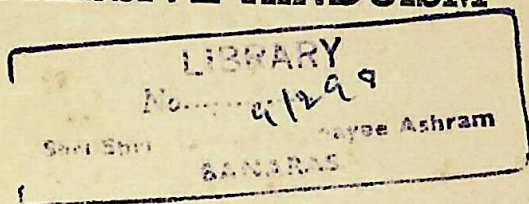


PRESENTED

SISTER NIVEDITA



# PRESENTED AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM



BY SISTER NIVEDITA OF  
RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA

*Author of "The Master as I saw Him" ;  
"The Civic and National Ideals" ;  
"The Web of Indian Life" ;  
"Cradle-Tales of Hinduism " ;  
etc., etc.*



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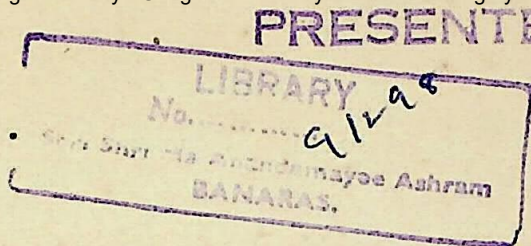
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## AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM

### I THE BASIS

"The True Hinduism, that made men work, not dream."—Dr. J. C. Bose.

ONE of the most valuable generalisations of the modern era is that which was first arrived at, just about the time of the French Revolution, that *the individual, in his development, follows the race*. Each man and woman, that is to say, when perfectly educated, becomes an epitome of the history either of his or her own race, or of Humanity as a whole. This great perception made itself felt as a definite element in a new scheme of education, through PESTALOZZI—the saint and guru of teachers in the twentieth century West. Pestalozzi saw that, if there were ever to be hope for the people, it must be through an education at once

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modern, that is liberal, psychological, that is founded on a knowledge of mental laws, and in accordance with the historic development of man.

The problem which the young student Pestalozzi, son and lover of the people, had to face at the end of the French Revolution, in Switzerland, was of trifling magnitude, compared with that which confronts the son and lover of India to-day. And yet, in their innermost nature, the two are identical. For this, like that, consists in the difficulty of opening up the human field to a new thought-harvest, while at the same time avoiding the evils of mere surface-culture. The soil that has brought forth the mango and the palm, ought not to be degraded to producing only gourds and vetches. And similarly, the land of the *Vedas* and of *Jnana-Yoga* has no right to sink into the rôle of mere critic or imitator of European Letters.

Yet this is the present condition of Indian culture, and it appears likely to remain so, unless the Indian mind can deliberately discipline itself to the historic point of view. To do this is like adjusting oneself to a new dimen-



sion. Things which were hitherto merged in each other, all at once become distinct. That which till now was instinctive, is suddenly seen to have a goal, which is capable, in its turn, of clear definition. The social and the religious idea, under Hinduism as under Islam, were in the past indistinguishable. Philosophically, of course, every tyro could detach one from the other in practice, however, they were one, and could not be separated. For religious reasons, as was supposed, we must eat in a certain way, wear specified clothing and fulfil definite scheme of purification. Suddenly, through the modern catastrophe, the sunlight of comparison, contrast and relativity is poured over the whole area and we discover that by living up to custom we have been not accumulating pious merit but merely approximating to that ideal of absolute refinement, cleanliness and purity, which is the dream of all fine human life and which may as well or better be achieved by some other canon, as by our own. Seeing the goal thus clearly, we become able to analyse and compare various methods; to add to our own conduct the virtues of others, and to eliminate from it the defects of all.

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Above all, we find out how to distinguish effectively between the social idea and religion. It is thus that it becomes possible to talk of "an Aggressive Hinduism."

Aggression is to be the dominant characteristic of the India that is to-day in school and class-room—aggression and the thought and ideals of aggression. Instead of passivity, activity; for the standard of weakness, the standard of strength; in place of a steadily-yielding defence, the ringing cheer of the invading host. Merely to change the attitude of the mind, in this way, is already to accomplish a revolution. And the inception of some such change will have become evident to us all within a dozen years.

But before the first step can be taken, there must be clear thought about essentials. The object of all religious systems is the formation of character. Theocratic systems aim at the construction of character through the discipline of personal habit. But at bottom, it is character and not habit that they desire to create. No one will dispute that her ideals are a still prouder fruit of Hinduism than her widespread refinement. It is true that India is the only



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country in the world where a penniless wanderer may surpass a king in social prestige. But still grander is the fact that the king may be a Janaka and the beggar, a Suke Deva.

Let us, then, touch on the comparative study of the value of habit as a factor in the evolution of character. We find in India that society watches a man all the years of his life, ready to criticise him for the hour at which he bathes and eats and prays, the mode of his travel, the fashion in which, perhaps, he wears his hair. To attempt a serious innovation on social custom in such directions as marriage or education, seems to horrified public opinion not merely selfish but also sacrilegious. And this kind of criticism becomes more and more powerful over the individual, as the villages empty themselves into the cities. For the man who might have had the courage to make his mark in the smaller community would think it presumptuous to go his own way in the larger. Hence the aggregation of men tends to become the multiplication of their weaknesses and defects. It is the mean and warped judgment that gains fastest in weight.

But let us look at a community in which

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active ends and ideals are energetically pursued. Here, a certain standard of personal refinement is exacted of the individual as rigidly as in India itself. But public opinion, being strong enough to kill, does not stoop to discuss such points. The learning of the method is relegated to the nursery, where it is imparted by women. Having passed through this stage of his education, it is not expected that the hero will fall short, in future, of its standards; but if he did so, society would know how to punish him by ignoring his existence. Both he and society, meanwhile, are too busy with other efforts to be able to waste force on what is better left to his own pride. For a whole new range of ideals has now come in sight. From the time that a Western child steps out of the nursery, it is not quietness, docility, resignation and obedience that his teachers and guardian strive to foster in him, so much as strength, initiative, sense of responsibility and power of rebellion. Temper and self-will are regarded by Western educators as a very precious power, which must by no means be crushed or destroyed, though they must undoubtedly be disciplined and subordinated to impersonal



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ends. It is for this reason that fighting is encouraged in our play-grounds, the only stipulation being for fairplay. To forbid a boy to undergo the physical ordeal means, as we think, undermining his sincerity as well as his courage. But for him to strike one who is weaker than himself is to stand disgraced amongst his equals.

That is to say, a social evolution which in Asia has occupied many centuries is in the West relegated to, at most, the first ten years of a child's upbringing and he then passes into the period of chivalry. Indeed if, as some suppose, the ten Avatârs of Vishnu are but the symbol of a single perfect life, India herself has not failed to point this lesson. For after the stages of fish, tortoise, boar and man-lion are all safely and happily passed and the child has become "a little man," it still remains for him to be twice a Kshatriya before he is able to become a Buddha. What is this but the modern generalisation that the individual in his development follows the race? And in the last sublime myth of Kalki, may it not be that we have the prophecy of a great further evolution, in which Buddha-hood itself

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shall plunge once more into a sovereign act of redeeming love and pity and initiate, for every individual of us, the triumph of active and aggressive ideals?

Let us suppose, then, that we see Hinduism no longer as the preserver of Hindu custom, but *as the creator of Hindu character*. It is surprising to think how radical a change is entailed in many directions by this conception. We are no longer oppressed with jealousy or fear, when we contemplate encroachments on our social and religious consciousness. Indeed, the idea of encroachment has ceased, because our work is not now to protect ourselves but to convert others. Point by point, we are determined not merely to keep what we had but to win what we never had before. The question is no longer of other people's attitude to us but rather of what we think of them. It is not how much we kept but how much have we annexed. We cannot afford now to lose, because we are sworn to carry the battle far beyond our remotest frontiers. We no longer dream of submission, because struggle itself has become only the first step towards a distant victory to be won.



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No other religion in the world is so capable of this dynamic transformation as Hinduism. To Nagarjuna and Buddhaghosha the Many was real and the ego unreal. To Sankarâchârya the One was real and the Many unreal. To Râmakrishna and Vivekânanda the Many and the One were the same Reality, perceived differently and at different times by the human consciousness. Do we realise what this means? It means that CHARACTER IS SPIRITUALITY. It means that laziness and defeat are not renunciation. It means, to protect another is infinitely greater than to attain salvation. It means that Mukti lies in overcoming the thirst for Mukti. It means that conquest may be the highest form of *sannyas*. It means, in short, that Hinduism is become aggressive, that the trumpet of Kalki is sounded already in our midst, and that it calls all that is noble, all that is lovely, all that is strenuous and heroic amongst us, to a battle-field on which the bugles of retreat shall never more be heard. .

## II

### THE TASK BEFORE US

"Forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not good ;  
fight is better.

Forgive, when you can bring legions of angels to  
an easy victory."

—Vivekananda.

IT is small wonder if, in the act of transition from old forms to new—from a mode of thought some centuries venerable to one untried and at best but modern,—it is small wonder if in the throes of so great a crisis, India should have passed through a generation or two of intellectual confusion. The astonishing phenomenon is rather the speed and ease of her re-adjustment. Within fifty years to have assimilated a new language and that of an unforeseen type, and to have made changes at almost every rung in the ladder of ideal culture,—is this a little thing? Is it a fact that could be duplicated anywhere? To speak in reply of Japan

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is mere foolishness. The problem of Japan, when midway through the nineteenth century, could hardly be compared with that of India. A small and compact people, of single origin, inhabiting islands and strong in their sense of insularity could naturally mobilise themselves in any direction they pleased. The number of people in India to-day who speak English fluently would people two or three Japans more than once. And in spite of all efforts to prevent it, the knowledge of English will go on spreading.

The trouble hitherto has been that the people were as passive to modern culture as to ancient. In a land where the segregation of the soul has been the aim of the highest thought and life for thousands of years, it has not been easy to turn every energy suddenly in the direction of activity and mutual co-operation. At bottom, however, there is strength enough in India and in spite of the demoralisation of hunger and baffled hope, her people are about to set foot on the threshold of a new era. The ebb of the tide has already reached its utmost. The reaction of fortune is about to commence. That this is so is due to the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Indian people



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can take a bird's-eye-view of their past history, and are able to understand clearly their true position.

There is a saying in India that to see through *Maya* is to destroy her. But few realise how literally this is true. The disaster or difficulty that has ceased to confuse and bewilder us is about to be defeated. The evil about which we can think and express ourselves clearly has already lost its power. To measure our defeat accurately is to reverse it. When a people, as a people, from the highest to the lowest, are united in straight and steady understanding of their circumstances without doubt and without illusion, then events are about to precipitate themselves. Discrimination is the mark of the highest spirituality. Spirituality is the only irresistible force. Like the fire that wraps a forest in flame, is the power of the mind of a whole nation.

From the year 1858 onwards there has been no possible goal for the Indian people but a complete assimilation of the modern consciousness. At that point the Mediæval order was at an end. Prithvi Raj and Shah Jehan, Asoka and Akbar were mingled in a common oblivion. Only the



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soil they had loved, only the people they had led, remained, to address themselves to a new task, to stand or fall by their power to cope with a new condition. Sharp as the contrast between the Gunga and the Jumna was the difference between the Mediæval and the Modern. Invincible as the resistless current of the Bhagirathi is that new India, that is to be born of both.

Up to the present, however, in the exhaustion of the transition, it has not been possible for the national mind to envisage the problem so as to see or state its terms clearly. To-day this first stage is over. The Indian mind is no longer in blind collapse. It is awaking to fresh strength, and about to survey both past and present, that by their means it may determine and forecast its future.

What are the *differentiae*, what is the precise problem of this modern age? Definitions are proverbially rash, but it is not difficult to state some facts and considerations bearing on this subject with great precision. The outstanding fact about the modern period has been undoubtedly the geographical discovery of the world as a whole. The one characteristic of the modern mind, that makes it unlike the mind of

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any other age, is the completeness with which it is able to survey and define the surface of the planet Earth. The discovery of steam, with the consequent invention of railways and steam-boats, has undoubtedly been the efficient cause of this exploration and out of the consequent clash of faiths and cultures has come the power to make the personal or mythological equation; to cancel, more or less to one's satisfaction, all the elements of local prejudice in a given problem; and from this again has been born the ideal of modern science, of modern culture generally, the attempt to extract the root-fact from all the diversity of phenomena in which it clothes itself.

In this way, the intellectual and spiritual discovery of the world has followed hard on the physical or geographical. In culture, a new era has been proclaimed. It is no longer enough to know one thing well. It is also incumbent upon us to understand its place amongst other things and its relation to the scheme of knowledge as a whole.

The pioneers of modernism meanwhile have been dominated by the ideal of the machine, to which they have owed so much of their suc-



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cess. To this fact we may trace our present-day standards of order and efficiency. A large house of business with its staff is simply a human machine of an intricate kind. It has been said that the Oriental regards his servants as personal attendants, the Western as so many hidden machines. Nothing could be more true. The Oriental is in every case an agriculturist accustomed to the picturesque disorder of seed-time and harvest, cow-shed and barn and far from irritated by it. Every thought and habit of the Western, on the other hand, is dominated by the motion of mechanical accuracy and efficiency and by the effort of the mechanician ~~to achieve~~ a given end by the most economical possible means.

In a society in which the highest knowledge fulfils the twofold test of order and synthesis, the great sin is provincialism. And here the new world differs from the old, in which the tastes of aristocrats were supreme and mortal crime lay in vulgarity.

But while the great intellectual and social failure of to-day lies in provincialism, no serious mind assumes that the world-idea is to be arrived at easily. Only the tree that is firm-rooted in

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its own soil can offer us a perfect crown of leaf and blossom. And similarly, only the heart that responds perfectly to the claims of its immediate environment, only the character that fulfils to the utmost its stint of civic duty, only this heart and mind is capable of taking its place in the ranks of the truly cosmopolitan. Only the fully national can possibly contribute to the cosmo-national.

And this is understood to-day by cultured persons all the world over. The cheap superciliousness of the young man, who on leaving his village in Kamschatka or Uganda has been initiated into the habits and manners of the European democracy and takes himself for this reason as an exalted and competent critic of his own people, only evokes a smile. No one desires his acquaintance, for he has nothing to add to the thoughtworld of those with whom he is so proud to have been associated. Every act, every movement writes large across his forehead the word 'snob.'

On the other hand, to take one's stand persistently on the local prejudices of the village in Kamschatka or Uganda, is, though infinitely more manly and self-respecting, almost as futile.



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It is better to be provincial than to be vulgar, for our horror of vulgarity is the longer grown. But both miss the effective achievement. What the time demands of us is that in us our whole past shall be made a part of the world's life. This is what is called the realisation of the national idea. But it must be realised everywhere, *in the world-idea*. In order to attain a larger power of giving we may break through any barrier of custom. But it is written inexorably in the very nature of things that, if we sacrifice custom merely for some mean or selfish motive, fine men and women everywhere will refuse to admit us to their fellowship.

Cosmo-nationality of thought and conduct, then, is not easy for any man to reach. Only through a perfect realisation of his own nationality can anyone anywhere win to it. And Cosmo-nationality consists in *holding the local idea in the world-idea*. It is well-known that culture is a matter of sympathy rather than of information. It would follow that the cultivation of the sense of humanity as a whole is the essential feature of a modern education. But this cannot be achieved by mere geographical knowledge. The unification of the

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world has emancipated the human mind to some extent, and we now understand that a man's character is the sum of his assimilated experiences; in other words, that his history is written in his face. And what is true of persons we see also to be true of countries. The very landscape is a key to the hopes and dreams of men. Their hopes and dreams explain to us the heritage they have left. History, then, is as essential to the modern consciousness as geography. It is the second dimension, as it were, of TRUTH, as we now seek it, naked and dynamic.

Our changed attitude changes all our conceptions. We make a new survey of our knowledge, and are no longer content to view dog as dog and cow as cow, but must needs learn all the links and developments between them. Their very differences are now regarded by us as a guarantee of their fundamental community of origin. We break open the rocks and scour the waste places of the earth, that we may find forms which will explain to us the divergence of horse-hoof from cow-hoof, reptile from fish and bird from both.

Or we turn to the study of art and letters. Here again, our scrutiny has entered on the com-



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parative stage. If we investigate the records of Baghdad, we must understand also those of Moorish Spain. It is not enough to follow the course of chivalry in France, unless we also assist at its birth in the German forests. Our idea of unity has become organic, evolutionary and some picture of the movement and clash of the world as a whole is an overmastering need.

Yet even the finest mind is limited by its own ignorance. What a painful blank in modern culture, whenever we come upon the word 'China'! How little has it been possible to say about India to which any cultivated Indian can give more than a pitying smile! And how utterly misunderstood is the Mohommedan world! The world of culture, be it remembered, is not tainted by political corruption. Race-prejudice has no place in the ideal aspiration after knowledge. Why then should a silence, almost political, pervade the spaces that ought to be filled with Oriental interpretation in modern thought?

The reason, as regards India, is easy enough to find. The Indian mind has not reached out to conquer and possess its own land as its own inalienable share and trust, in the world as a



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whole. It has been content, even in things modern, to take obediently whatever was given to it. And the newness and strangeness of the thing given has dazed it. The Indian people as a whole for the last two generations have been as men walking in a dream, without manhood, without power to react freely against conditions, without even commonsense.

But to-day in the deliberate adoption of an aggressive policy we have put all this behind us. Realising that life is struggle, we are now determined that our wrestling with the powers that are against us, shall enable us to contribute to the world's sum of culture, not merely to make adaptations from it. Our part henceforth is active and not passive. The Indianising of India, the organising of our national thought, the laying out of our line of march, all this is to be done by us, not by others, on our behalf. We accept no more programmes. Henceforth are we become the makers of programmes. We obey no more policies. Henceforth do we create policies. We refuse longer to call by the name of education the apprenticeship necessary for a ten-rupee clerkship. We put such things in their true place. We ordain ourselves intellec-

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tually free. What, then, is the task before us?

Our task is to translate ancient knowledge into modern equivalents. We have to clothe the old strength in a new form. The new form *without* that old strength is nothing but a mockery: almost equally foolish is the savage anachronism of an old-time power without fit expression. Spiritually, intellectually there is no undertaking, but we must attempt it.

Great realms of the ideal open for our exploration. New conceptions of life and duty, and freedom; new ideas of citizenship; untried expressions of love and friendship, into all these we ~~must~~ throw ourselves with burning energy, and make them our own.

We must create a history of India in living terms. Up to the present that history, as written in English, practically begins with Warren Hastings, and crams in certain unavoidable preliminaries, which cover a few thousands of years, and, troublesome as they are, cannot be altogether omitted! All this is merely childish and has to be brought to the block. The history of India has yet to be written for the first time. It has to be humanised, emotionalised, made the



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trumpet-voice and evangel of the races that inhabit India. And to do this, it must be re-connected with *place*. Calcutta, Madras and Bombay are the present view-points! Surely the heroes that sleep on ancient battle-fields, the forefathers that made for themselves the wide-walled cities, the scholars that left behind them precious thought and script, have laughed sometimes, when they have not wept to see from high heaven the grotesque docility of their descendants! The history of India consists in truth of the strata of at least three thousand years. Ocean-bed and river-sands, forest and marsh, and ocean-floor again, lie piled one upon the other—and in each period some new point is centre. Ayodhya and Hastinápura, Indraprastha and Pâtaliputra, Ujjain and Delhi, Conjeeveram and Amaravati, what of the vanished worlds of which all these were born? There is no evangel without worship. Throw yourselves, children of India, into the worship of these and your whole past. Strive passionately for *knowledge*. Yours are the spades and mattocks of this excavation. For with you and not with the foreigner, are the thought and language that will make it easy to



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unearth the old significance. India's whole hope lies in a deeper research, a more rigid investigation of facts. With her, encouragement and not despair, is on the side of truth !

Great literatures have to be created in each of the vernaculars. These literatures must voice the past, translate the present, forecast the future. The science and the imagination of Europe have to be brought, through the vernacular, to every door. India cannot afford to imitate foreign institutions. Neither can she afford to remain ignorant of foreign ideals. The history of the past has to be re-written, in simple terms. True hope for the time to come must fill all hearts, like a nation's Common Prayer. On the creation of such vernacular literatures, depends the effective education of women.

Art must be reborn. Not the miserable travesty of would-be Europeanism that we at present know. There is no voice like that of art to reach the people. A song, a picture—these are the fiery cross,\* that reaches all the tribes and makes them one. And art *will* be

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\* A rough cross of charred wood used to be passed from clan to clan in the Scottish Highlands, as the call to war. We all know the folded chapati of the Indian villages.

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reborn, for she has found a new subject—India herself. Ah, to be a thinker in bronze and give to the world the beauty of the Southern *Pariah*, as he swings, scarce-clad, along the Beach-Road at Madras! Ah, to be a Millet and paint the woman worshipping at dawn beside the sea! Oh for a pencil that would interpret the beauty of the Indian *Sari*; the gentle life of village and temple; the coming and going at the Ganges-side; the play of the children; the faces and the labours, of the cows!

But far more, on behalf of India herself, do we need artists, half poets and half draughtsmen, who can wake in us the great new senses. We want men of the Indian blood, who can portray for us the men of old—Bhîshma and Yudhisthira, Akbar and Sher Shah, Pratâp Singh and Chând Bibi,—in such fashion as to stir the blood. We want through these to feel out, as a people, towards the new duties of the time to be. Not only to utter India to the world, but also to voice India to herself—this is the mission of art, divines mother of the ideal, when it descends to clothe itself in forms of realism.



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At each step, then, the conquest must be two-fold. On this side something to be added to the world's knowledge and on that, an utterance to be given for the first time, for India to herself. This is the battle that opens before the present generation. On our fighting a good fight, the very existence, it may be, of the next depends. Our national life is become perforce a national assault. As yet the very outworks of the besieged city are almost unstormed. Herewith then let us sound the charge. Sons of the Indian past, do ye fear to sleep at nightfall on your shields? On, on, in the name of a new spirituality, to command the treasures of the modern world! On, on, soldiers of the Indian Motherland, seize ye the battlements and penetrate to the citadel! Place garrison and watch within the hard-won towers or fall, that others may climb on your dead bodies to the height ye strove to win.



### III THE IDEAL

"Be what thou prayest to be made."

THE adoption of the active or aggressive attitude of mind changes for us all our theories. We sight now nothing but the goal. Means have become ends, ends means. The power to count the cost and hesitate is gone for ever. We seek great objects and create them, scorn-  
ing small hopes. The India about us has become 'Mahâ Bhârata, 'Heroic India.' The future offers wider chances of sacrifice than the past. We look to make our descendants greater than our ancestors.

Words have changed their meanings. *Karma* is no longer a destiny, but an opportunity. Do I behold injustice? Mind the right to prohibit oppression, and I do it. Before the honest indignation of one fearless man the whole of *Mâyâ* trembles and departs.

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Destiny is passive before me. I triumph over it. Strength is the power to take our own life at its most perfect and break it, if need be, across the knee. This strength is now ours and with it we conquer the earth. No one is so invincible as the man who has not dreamt of defeat, because he has a world beyond victory to achieve.

Our desires have grown immeasurable. But they are desires to give, not to receive. We would fain wish that we may abandon to those behind us and pass on. For that which is dearer to us than self, we long greatly to throw away our life and this defeated sacrifice transforms all our work with energy. The whole of life becomes the quest of death. Those that are close to us become associated with ourselves in our risks and defiances. We learn to realise that in this fact lies their beatitude. Buddha did not sacrifice Yasodhara when he left her. He conferred on her the glory of renouncing with him.

Or is it *brahmacharya*? This is not only for the monk. Nor is it wholly of the body. "Abstinence," says one, "without a great purpose is nothing. It is only the loss of



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another power." But even *brahmacharya* has to be made aggressive. Celibacy, here, is only the passive side of a life that sees human beings actively as minds and souls. Marriage itself ought to be, in the first place, a friendship of the mind. Exchange of thought and communion of struggle is far beyond the offering of comfort and the one need not exclude the other. The *brahmacharya* of the hero makes marriage noble, for it seeks the good of another as an end in itself. In true *brahmacharya* is involved the education of women, for a radiant purity comes to its perfect fruition in thought and knowledge and assimilation of experience, and there is a *brahmacharya* of the wife, as well as of the nun.

In the life of *tapasya* is constant renewal of energy and light. Every task becomes easy to the worshipper of Sarasvati. He spurns ease. Daily and hourly does the impersonal triumph in him over the personal. His ideal aspires upward like a living flame. Each circle reveals fresh heights to be gained. The wife shares in the ideals of her husband. She protects them, as if they were her children,



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even, against himself. She urges him on towards them, when alone he might have flagged. She measures their common glory by the degree of this realisation. Her womanhood is grave and tender like some sacrament of the eternal. 'Not this, not this,' is the cry ever in the ears of both. Counting happiness for self a little thing each gives it to the other, in seeking to bestow it on the world around.

*Sannyas*, again, is a word charged with new significance. It is not his gerrua cloth but his selflessness that makes a monk. There may be monks of science and learning, monks of art and industry, monks of the public life and service and monks for the defence of the defenceless. Great is the impulse of renunciation; greater is the *sustained* self-sacrifice of a heroic life. In the soul of the *maha-purusha*, it is difficult sometimes to tell whether soldier of Sannyasi is predominant. He combines the daring of the one with the freedom of the other. Years leave no mark on the aggressive life. It is as ready to cast itself down from the palm-tree's height in old age, as it was in youth. Or more. For the spiritual

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will has grown stronger with time. Nothing is measured by personal hope or fear. All is tested by the supreme purpose, as making an end in itself. Self ceases to be a possible motive. The hand once put to the plough, it grows there and the man would not know how to turn back. The *Sannyasin* cannot be touched by misery. For him defeat is merely a passing phase. Ultimate victory is inevitable. He is light-hearted in failure as in success.

Obedience to the *Guru* becomes eager fulfilment of an idea and a seeking out of new ways in which to bring about fulfilment. Every act of attainment is now understood to be a spiritual achievement and there is no rest without the handing on of each realisation, as to disciples. At the same time the standard of discipleship has grown inexorable. There is no passing of the spurious coin as genuine. The aspirant must serve, because without much service there is no germination of truth. He must worship because without loyalty there is no manhood. But one stain of insincerity, one blemish of self-interest and the *Guru* must recognise—though to do so be like going



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maimed for life—that this is not that *chela* for whom all *Gurus* seek.

Love and hatred are now immense powers. Love, when no longer personal, when all strength, becomes rousing, invigorating, life-giving. Hatred is the refusal to compromise. It cuts off meanness and falsehood, root and branch. Love now finds unity of intention behind everything that is sincere. Pride is too proud to found itself on a lie. The man is silent until he has first acted. Nor dare he boast himself of the deeds of his ancestors or the achievements of his fellows. A fierce humility mingles with all his ambition and tells him that praise from unworthy lips is sacrilege.

And finally the life's purpose has become a consuming fire. The object is desired for its own sake. Like Shivi-Rana, whose whole soul was set on sacrifice, the left side weeps that to the right alone it is given to suffer. Like Myer, the German chemist, who had an eye and an arm torn off in the discovery of nitrogen compounds, the soul kneels in the midst of agony to give thanks in an ecstasy that enough is still left to continue the search for knowledge. The vibration of the word 'Work' when



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uttered by such workmen carries the thrill of *Jnana* to other hearts.

Strong as the thunderbolt, austere as *brahmacharya*, great-hearted and self-less, such should be that *Sannyasin* who has taken the service of others as his *Sannyas*, and not less than this should be the son of a militant Hinduism.

#### IV

### ON THE WAY TO THE IDEAL

OF all forms of ignorance few are at once so mean and so easy to fall into as that of self-idealism. How often instead of aspiring upwards we are merely worshipping our own past! Almost all good people are conscious of a great intensity of power and devotion in early youth. They are very apt to look back for ever after on the outside form which their life took at that period and try all their lives to force that particular form on others. True freedom is a thing of which very few of us have ever caught a glimpse!

Self-idealism is a very special danger at the present time. This is a period of the recapture of ideals. We are always diving into the past in order to recover the thread of our own development. We exalt the name we bear. We praise our own ancestors. We seem to laud



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ourselves up to the skies. All this, however, is meant for encouragement, not for conceit. 'Children of the rishis!' exclaims a great orator to the crowd before him; but if some common man derives from this the idea that he is a *rishi*, he shows his own *tamas* and nothing more. This was not the reaction intended by the orator. Similarly, when we say that Christ represents in Europe the Asiatic man, we mean the *ideal* of Asia, not any chance individual on the pavement. We must be careful to think clearly in this matter. Many persons propose for three hundred millions of people that they should practise the methods of Jesus, of Chaitanya, of Tukaram, and nothing, they say, could resist them.

Nothing could resist them! Of course not, if each one of us *were* a Chaitanya, or a Jesus! "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth," said the prophet of the Christ. But is *our* silence so eloquent as this? Only *tamas* makes this mistake! The methods of Christ will not bring the victory of Christ to *the man who is not Christ*! In him, the dumbness of the sheep is mere sheepishness, not Christ-likeness.

PRESENTED

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Again says the *tâmasic* : Let me wait for the victory, then, till I *am* like Him ! Very good, if self-engrossment were the way to become so. But unfortunately for you, it is not ! Only the man *who forgets himself* for the victory can ever reach Christhood. Buddha died for smaller ends five hundred times, before it was possible for Him to become the Buddha ! Each time He forgot life, forgot death, became merged in the struggle without a thought beyond. In the end, He had earned the empire of the world and had to renounce the certainty of that in order to mount the step beyond, that made Him the vessel of compassion to the soul.

Each man has his own stepping-stones across the river of Mâyâ. From stone to stone, one step at a time, we go. Our whole soul must be in the next step. Not for most of us to reach the Absolute now : for most of us only the immediate end, whatever it be and for that, to forget self ! Only through action can we rise to that which is beyond action.

The world is full of causes for which a man may give his all. Ladders of rope by which we may draw ourselves up to the *mukti* are at



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present out of sight. Many souls, many planes; not for all souls a single gospel. Only through all runs the great law by renunciation alone, by forgetfulness of self do men rise to the Supreme Goal.

If we really forget Self, any good, not our own, will appeal to us. The good of others as an end in itself will become an appetite in us. We shall spend no time arguing as to theories and ideals, methods and plans. We shall *live* for the good of others; we shall merge ourselves in the struggle. The battle, the soldier and the enemy will become one. Ours only the right to action, ours never be fruit of action! But not as having already attained! Ages of strenuous activity are the opportunity of many to reach God-consciousness. We pant for the ordeal, we thirst for active service—not that we are already fit, but that by facing the cannon's mouth we may become fit. "By pouring himself like an oblation on the fire of battle, by remaining unterrified in moments of great terror, has Duryodhana attained to this felicity!" How knightly is the commendation! How heroic the path! "Things are not bettered, but *we*

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are bettered by making changes in them," said the Swami Vivekananda.

So the world is a school, a gymnasium for the soul. Humanity is not a great hall of mirrors, in which a single figure is reflected again and again, here well and badly there. God yearns to achieve Himself supremely and differently in each one of us. All that we may take from the Pattern-Lives is the law that guided them, the aim for which they toiled. Renunciation! Renunciation! Renunciation! In the panoply of reunciation plunge thou into the ocean of the unknown. Accept the exigencies of thy time, the needs of thy place, as the material out of which the soul is to build its own boat for the great journey. Think not that it can copy exactly any that has gone before. To them look only for the promise that where they have succeeded thou shalt not utterly fail. Then build, and launch. Set out to find—Thyself! And let thy going-forth be as a blaze of encouragement to those who have yet to depart!

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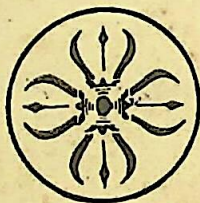






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